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EDITORIAL.

The Left in Melbourne today is shit. Why are we always marching towards parliament, petitioning their government?

Why are we always trying to speak to a mainstream that exists only on television? When did we lose faith in ourselves to propose real alternatives to our rape-the-world social system? The social movements, the parties, the discussions we keep having again and again never seem to be able to see beyond the world as it is towards as it could be… should be… will be.

What is the real anarchist bombthrower? Is she the one that kills the tsar or burns the parliament? A system that thrives on destruction, that needs destruction, as much as capitalism cannot really fear those bombs. The real weapons are self-organisation and self-management. The truth in the bombthrower myth is that we are engaged in a social war, and that our weapons truly are intended as terrorist acts, to terrify the ruling class and our would-be rulers. We want to explode the world. We want to explode the atrophied visions of what the world could be. We want to regain the courage to run our own lives, when the world is full of people telling us we're simply not qualified (blow them up too!).

We therefore offer this paper as one more bomb to throw. This paper should be a place where the anarchist community can reflect upon the political climate, generate new ideas for action, and share news of current struggles. But please, don't let this become the mouthpiece for any organisation. Keep it alive, full of contradictions, schizophrenic, like our movements tend to be. A new praxis will not come out of old forms. The first form on the guillotine must be the leftist paper-seller. When you participate in movements, please don't try to distribute *Melbourne Black* (we'll blow you up). Instead, talk to people. Argue with people. Learn how people are trying to organise today. Again: when you go to that rally, don't sell the paper. Write it. Share it. It's the only way we're going to become bombthrowers again. ◆

A FEW FACTS AND A LOT OF STORIES ABOUT BLACK PEOPLE.

BY SEAMUS

I wanted to tell you a story. It went something like this. A woman from the Northern Territory got in a fight. It happened somewhere on Smith Street, but it spilled onto Gertrude street. She was going a bit crazy: she had a knife. She stabbed some folks.

She knocked over motorbikes. At one stage, she chased one of her victims, a Wurundjeri woman, into a restaurant. The management kicked them out. The woman has been taken into the custody of her majesty's courts. I think that's how it goes. But, please, don't take my word for it. Because after talking to several people and trying to piece together the story, I'm still not sure I know it. What I can tell you is how I tried to find the facts, the bare facts, and was continually met by the overwhelming power of narrative.

Leaning against the brick walls of MAYSAR, we drank from his bottle of port. Our eyes were open for cops. Since Local Law 8 has come into effect, public drinking is banned. My companion, an old Wurundjeri man, knitted his brows as he told me what he had heard. I heard it there first. A Wurundjeri woman had been stabbed. He didn't quite know who, or where, or why, as he had been out of Melbourne for some time. But she had run into a restaurant somewhere around here and the owner had kicked her out. My ears pricked up. I saw my headline. "Racist restaurateur throws out Indigenous woman in her hour of need," or something like that. That was definitely the kind of story I wanted to be writing for the first issue of *Melbourne Black*. I had to know more, to explode this travesty. Then the community could confront the bastard, whoever he was (had to be a he, right?).

I met up with Ringo, a Wurundjeri elder, with his friend in a cluttered apartment out in the suburbs. We drank instant coffee and smoked cigarettes. He told me a bit about Wurundjeri history. I eased the conversation towards My Story. He admitted that his knowledge was limited, but he gave me a few more facts which I dutifully recorded. He told me that the attacker had been weaving a path of destruction (the motorbikes), and that not one but three people had been stabbed. I was in the process of discarding my distaste for sensationalism when he dropped the bombshell. The attacker was an indigenous woman. From the Northern Territory. And me in the Anti-Intervention Collective. Well, fuck. "More blackfella violence?" This wasn't the article I wanted to write. This was the kind of article that wins elections for law-and-order politicians. But perhaps there was something to salvage. Ringo highlighted "the reluctance of shopkeepers to provide assistance to people when they need help." Yes, that was still true. It didn't matter who the attacker was, the manager of the restaurant was still a fuckwit. And of course, where were the police in all of this? They're quick to harass indigenous people for drinking, but when someone actually needs help and security, they're nowhere to be found until three people have been stabbed in a rampage that crossed an entire city block! I needed to talk to a politician.

It was an ungodly hour. 10AM I think. I'm never awake at 10AM if I can help it. I drafted this article at three in the morning, and I'm writing this, the final draft, at three in the morning. These are my regular business hours. But some people have jobs, and when I want to talk to them I have to fit into their schedule. Steve Jolly, Socialist Party councillor in Yarra City, is just such a person. He met me in a café on Brunswick street over lattés with plenty of sugar. He had more answers than I had questions, which was a hell of a relief. Principally, we talked about Local Law 8.

I was at the meeting when Yarra council voted unanimously-but-one to ban drinking on public streets. Steve told me that what we had all feared, that this would mean the clearence of indigenous people from their usual gathering spaces, had come to pass, and then some. The people who used to gather on Smith street by the TAB

Where are the police investigating a hit-and-run, reckless driving, and speeding, even for formality's sake? They don't exist, because the boys were black.

bank, just down the road from Safeway, have moved to other locales. The law which was meant to clean up drunken and anti-social behaviour has made it worse. Previously, indigenous people annoyed shopkeepers. Now, they annoy their neighbours, and the neighbours are getting them evicted. Even worse, many people have retreated to the highrise estates of Richmond, notorious distribution centres for heroin. Communities need a place to function, to welcome visitors, to discuss problems, and to resolve disputes. One such place has been lost, and the community that might have prevented the attack wasn't there to do it. Moreover, the limited legal, psychiatric, and medical services that serve Wurundjeri people have had increasing difficulties getting in contact with their clients. And the shop-owners? Apparently since law 8 drove the blackfellas away, a bunch of the whitefellas left too (and they were the ones with the money!). I don't know whether it's some sort of conscience, the aesthetic, or the financial crisis, but we finally have something to celebrate about Brunswick-street hipsters. When I asked about the role of the police, Jolly told me that they represent "law and order specifically directed at vulnerable people." He admitted Smith street could be violent. At night, he said it might just be the most dangerous place in the city. But that was due primarily to "white males on alcohol, speed, and amphetamines." Certainly, Steve Jolly had just saved my headline. "Local law 8 destroys indigenous communities, increasing violence." But I couldn't help but wonder whether the picture was all a bit rosy (stay with me here). The story fit too well into Rousseau's picture of the noble savage: initially born into a blissful state, corrupted by the withering hand of Western civilisation. It can be a useful myth for highlighting the violence of colonisation. But it is also a myth that denies indigenous people any agency. Better ask the savages.

Robbie and Glenda Thorpe seemed reluctant to discuss the issue with me at first. The nightmarish headlines that passed through my mind must have passed through theirs as well. When I explained my politics and my objectives, they opened up somewhat. They told me a story so similar to Steve's that I realised where he had done his research. They fleshed out some of the details: Dante's Restaurant on Gertrude Street, in case you've been wondering. Then they brought me to the real story I had to write.

They showed me print-outs from two online news sources. They told the story of how a car had plowed into two young men in Epping. The lads' friends had confronted the driver, who fled the scene. The stories quoted friends of the victims, citing the driver's recklessness, but in the end the reporters both sided with the driver. "Mob turns on driver after car hits teens" and "Drunken Mob Attack Car & Driver in Epping." Apparently the mob tried to open his doors. Apparently he feared for his life. Apparently he escaped without injury (except to his vehicle). The boys he hit were not so lucky. The story sounded complicated, too complicated for me to sort out, but the state and the media found it relatively simple: "Police are investigating the mob attack but have made no arrests." (No citation is necessary, you've already read this story a thousand times). Where are the police investigating a hit-and-run, reckless driving, and speeding, even for formality's sake? They don't exist, because the boys were black. It doesn't matter, really, whether the "mob" was aggressive or not. What matters is that, as a matter of course, our society's institutions of ideology and repression automatically cast indigenous people into the role of the aggressor, even when they are being run down in the street by white motorists. The lady doth protest too much: this constant framing of reality into a narrative of barbaric black people strikes me as a way for white society to suppress its guilt that, in this land, with this history, we are the aggressors. We are the attackers. If there were any justice, we would be investigated. Thankfully there isn't, so I could carry on researching my article.

I was back at MAYSAR when Robbie and Glenda showed me these articles, where my story began. Sitting in a chair on the stoop was an old man who struck me as slightly comical: his beard and his hair were too big for the rest of his spindly body. He told me he was Uncle Jack Charles. Had I seen *Bastard*? "Self-declared leader. Write that down." He grinned. In exchange for my undivided attention, courtesy, and cigarettes (this part of my article cost me half a pack), he told me about his life. He had once had all sorts of wonderful principles. Then he got hooked on drugs. I didn't ask which, but he made it clear he meant "bad" drugs, not "I tried it at a party" drugs. "One you've got addicted, all those principles fall by the wayside." He had committed various thefts and burglaries to support his habit (never in his own community, some principles he kept). He went in and out of jail. Eventually he sobered up. He tried to skill himself up as a community leader, though not many people

listen to him today. For Uncle Jack Charles, social organisation in the indigenous community must begin with the fight against addictions which rob people of their autonomy and their ability to organise their own futures. The public services on offer are not up to this task. Healthcare centres turn people away when they're high, when they need help the most. All of the services are run by career bureaucrats. Black or white, he told me, they have never experienced addiction, jail or homelessness. In their position, it renders them "incapable of compassion." I wrote it all down, it all sounded important.

Then I sat down to write this article. What had I learned? I learned that there are real problems of addiction, alcoholism, homelessness, joblessness and violence. I had heard first-hand what being an addict does to your ability to politicise. I learned that the institutions that are supposedly in place to solve these social problems actually make them worse. Health services alienate people instead of healing them. Public housing is a place for people to get addicted and get in fights rather than build community. Police provide harassment rather than protection (except for propertarians). And the press passes off racist rants as news. And can I really offer you anything better, in terms of what happened that night on Gertrude street?

All I have is a few sketchy accounts, none from eyewitnesses. I can't tell you who precisely did what exactly for G** knows what reason. I went looking for facts and kept finding stories. So I decided in the end to tell you the story of how I kept running into all of these stories. Don't fool yourself and take me for a post-modernist: these stories have power. We can tell all sorts of stories about indigenous people. Maybe they're victims and they need our well-meaning aid. Maybe they're savages and need our well-meaning repression. Maybe maybe maybe. Uncle Jack told me that for a drug rehabilitation program to work, it would have to be designed and run by junkies or ex-junkies, because they're the ones who know what is needed. But for that to happen, for society's most marginalised people to seize control of their lives, their stories need to be heard. At the moment, those stories are drowned out by everyone who speaks from a more privileged or respected position, no matter what the speakers' intentions. As an activist I find it too easy to approach a situation with the answers worked out, seeking only enough knowledge of "concrete social-historical circumstances" to adapt my answers to other people's lives. This is when one must remember what it means to express solidarity as an anarchist. Admit your own ignorance, the limitations of your own experience, and listen. ◆

INTERVIEW WITH L.A.S.N.E.T.

BY MICHAEL

This interview is intended as an exploration of how choices of struggles and context inform how groups organise and what actions they take; and further, to seek perspectives of how solidarity as an organising principle should operate.

This interview is intended as an exploration of how choices of struggles and context inform how groups organise and what actions they take; and further, to seek perspectives of how solidarity as an organising principle should operate. Thus, I am interviewing Lucho Riquelme from the Latin American Solidarity Network (LASNET) to explore how, in this case, solidarity campaigns for Latin American peoples undertaken in Melbourne has informed their praxis; and more broadly, where LASNET places itself in a struggle for a better world. Before proceeding, I thought it would be appropriate to outline my own perspective on the meaning of solidarity.

It was through my re-readings of *Wobblies and Zapatistas* by Lynd & Grubacic, Bookchin's *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*, and the El Kilombo Intergalactico Collective's interview with Subcomandante Marcos, *Beyond Resisitance: Everything*, which have assisted in clarifying my position. Lynd outlines, most specifically for those from either a privileged position in society or with highly specialised (and useful) skills, the concept of 'accompaniment' as a means of assisting struggles and acting in solidarity with others. One, when acting in solidarity, should 'accompany' those in struggle, tailoring one's assistance to meet the

direct needs of those one is assisting. Accompaniment's strengths lie in its open acknowledgment that social privilege exists and using the advantages this privilege gives individuals in undertaking, or supporting, revolutionary struggle. What I see as, to a large extent, counter posed to this view is the El Kilombo Intergalactico's observation that:

> The notion of "solidarity" that still pervades most of the Left in the U.S. has continually served an intensely conservative political agenda that dresses itself in the radical rhetoric of the latest rebellion in the "darker nations" while carefully maintaining political action at a distance from our own daily lives, thus producing a political subject (the solidarity provider) that more closely resembles a spectator or voyeur (to the suffering of others) than a participant or active agent, while simultaneously working to reproduce the solidarity recipient to a mere object (of our pity and mismatched socks)[1].

This problematises both Lynd's view of accompaniment (which hints at reducing anyone from the Global North to the role of supporter rather than participant) and, to a much larger extent, the often negligence of activists in engaging with their own needs, and those in their own community, whilst instead focusing on championing the cause of those in the Global South. One cannot, whilst class divisions continue to exist in our own community, ignore our needs or separate them from the needs of those who are geographically distant. Our struggles are interconnected, yet how class divisions impact us directly is different in different contexts. Thus solidarity is not only acting in acknowledgement of our commonalities, but also (thanks Bookchin) the *complementarities* of our struggles. Complementarity, in this sense, makes allowances for the social, political and historical contexts and imperatives of different struggles; whilst maintaining a means of connecting varied struggles for radical social change. It is this idea of complementarity that I see as not only capable of fostering an environment supportive of difference, but also one in which difference (in the needs, aims and tactics of those engaged in revolutionary struggle) can be explored thoroughly in order to build new forms of organising and struggling that are mutual beneficial for all. These are my thoughts on the function of solidarity.

1 El Kilombo Intergalactico Collective, '*Beyond Resistance: Everything – An interview with Insurgente Subcommandante Marcos*', AK Press, p. 2.

Michael: What does solidarity mean to you?

Lucho: What's solidarity? It has a meaning but I'm not exactly the meaning from the dictionary, you know? It's a Greek word which means something like "all together". For us solidarity is important, as is creating awareness and trying to get people together to support each other. So the idea of solidarity in relation to Latin America or helping other peoples, because some people associate solidarity with charity and charity is not a means to… or doesn't resolve problems, charity is like covering a hole. Charity doesn't fix problems; charity just helps to creates more problems. Solidarity means that we recognise people and recognise struggles. We support struggles, in different means. It doesn't mean only monetary, we can support people who need like a letter, a letter is so important for people who are in prison, for example, or people who are isolated, so to send a letter of support, recognising struggle or recognising people, is more welcome to people then millions of dollars. So solidarity for us is to get together, recognise struggle, recognise people and try to put together struggles.

Where do you place Latin American Solidarity campaigns within a broader movement towards a radical re-structuring of society?

With the campaign and all the work we're doing, we're trying, first of all, to denounce injustice, denounce inequality and try to move, and make awareness of the necessity of change. Like, for example, we are trying to get the Coca-Cola campaign, which aims to denounce multinationals inside a Capitalist State, like that of Colombia, and some people misunderstood and think that we only denounce the multinational – Coca-Cola, why don't we denounce the State? Or why are we just supporting workers or union leaders in Colombia? Because for this multinational to work it needs a structure, needs a state, needs a Capitalist system to work to be able to use its violence against people. In that sense, what we try to do with our campaign is supporting people's struggle, and the resistance of people, as I mentioned before, and also to recognise the autonomy of Indigenous peoples and recognise the right of workers to have better conditions, good conditions, under a Capitalist State. But we're also acting to change the structure of the Capitalist State, to change the State to a better or different state, we're not sure how this state will be called, but for people in this country we should be supporting and organising to change the situation there. So that's what our campaign is aimed at: to give new possibilities of change and new possibilities of living.

Internationalism is to fight the same enemy, which for a long time has been Capitalism.

Because for this multinational to work it needs a structure, needs a state, needs a Capitalist system to work to be able to use its violence against people.

What is your opinion on Internationalism? What does it mean? And how can we act in a way that can effectively assist geographically distant places?

Internationalism is to fight the same enemy, which for a long time has been Capitalism. And we need to fight wherever they stay, wherever you see problems, wherever you see injustice, wherever you see exploitation. If you have a little bit of a conscience, you need to do something. In this case, we are supporting the workers overseas, the Indigenous people, the poor people, we support the homosexuals, and we support women. In any part of the world we find the same problems, so for me Internationalism means we fight for the same cause. We, by fighting over here, can support people elsewhere. And if the struggle is quick here, we can go and offer our assistance elsewhere.

So how can we connect the struggles or make links or build bridges? That's the main focus of our work, to build bridges and organising globally, because that's the only way to win. To struggle together with people in other countries. We are human, we need to fight the same enemies and we need to get together. Here, for example, the struggle is slow, and in other countries the struggle is quicker, you can see and touch the struggle. Here we need more people; we need more women and men to fight in this difficult moment. It is made even more difficult because everyone now is accused of being a terrorist if you fight for better rights. It is easy for the State and the ruling class to accuse you of terrorism, thus it is so important to create situations in which to explain what terrorism really is, because people have it confused. And that's why Internationalism is very important, because we need to organise internationally, globally and we need to fight now.

What do you consider LASNET's function to be? What are its aims?

(Lucho referred me to LASNET's aims as stated on their website, I won't reprint them here due to space limitations—you can view them at www.latinlasnet.org)

How has this guided the way in which LASNET organises and how does it guide what actions LASNET undertakes?

When we began LASNET about 2002, the best way we decided collectively to work was as a collective, a collective that can facilitate everyone to be able work and take on responsibilities, anyone can be the main activist or anyone can be the main spokesperson of the group. In other words, we try to organise collectively, horizontally and allow everyone to make decisions in the way we are working so. We organise one large conference annually. In this conference we decide the campaigns we want to run for the year. So for this year, we had a visit from people from Colombia and Mapuche, so we're working around those ideas. Before, people from Bolivia came so we decided to support Bolivian struggles, to support the Coalition of Popular and Indigenous Organisations, as well as Brazil's MST and Mexican Zapatistas. So in that way we follow the decision that comes out of these big meetings we have once every year. In 2008 we had an Indigenous international conference, so we decided to follow up from that by choosing to support Indigenous struggles. That's why we are involved in struggle here also, in Australia, because we made Australian people part of that conference. So we're thinking that the participation of the people is the best way, so, that's why it's very important to have this conference or gathering.

Due to this structure our campaigns sometimes get difficult, all our people are volunteers, and some people start being very active and they leave because of other priorities, so that's why sometimes we end up with only a few of us. Although, I think this is the way a solidarity group functions, because sometimes you have a lot of people and sometime sometimes the people reduce, and many are only involved for a few months. Because we don't have an official structure, NGO status or funding or any economical source to support our ability to work, but sometimes this helps us because the people who are involved actually really want to be here.

Have these actions been effective? In what cases, and in what context have they best functioned?

Sometimes I think the gathering is the best way to organise, the best way to get people involved and to take the ideas towards the work we're doing. Sometimes the actions are very difficult because there are new things happening everyday, and sometimes we have to decide to have an action or a rally in a week. I don't know, obviously we don't have many people involved, don't have much support, but we are trying get more support, at the moment towards a rally for Colombia we have organised. I don't know if this rally will work, we called it about one and a half months ago and we haven't had much response at the moment, but I hope in the next few days we can do it. This rally is a test for us.

There is also the issue of the Federal Police. Just one month ago, there have been harassments of activists for Colombia. Some people have been very scared, I don't know why, because if people are being threatened or harassed then you need to be more active because our work is solidarity work, and we shouldn't be harassed for what we are doing. So I think what we're doing, our work and others, has been effective because it has drawn a response from repressive forces, which have been active in relation to us too.

What doesn't work?

I think the question what doesn't work is very difficult. You don't know sometimes if something is going to work. So if you want to say what situation doesn't work it's the situation of people's commitment, commitment to do some stuff, because especially with this work some people don't make much of a commitment. I think this is happening a lot with activists at the moment. Maybe people are finding it more difficult to take more responsibility or being more committed to doing stuff. That's the main thing I can say isn't working at the moment: no commitment. We don't know what we need to do to encourage people to make more commitments.

LASNET involves itself organising to assist both class struggles and Indigenous struggles. Where are the convergence points between class struggles, and more specifically anarchist aims, and Indigenous struggles? What are the differences in perspective, and how can links between these movements be improved?

I think this question is a bit problematic. We, on the Left, put levels on struggles, to put names on different groups who are fight for the same cause. We face now a situation for society that we have different struggles because Capitalism has been able to split the struggles in different areas, and the Left has followed that. So we have been like a reflection on the Capitalist State.

When the big changes happened on the Left following the collapse of the Soviet Union a big discussion between different groups occurred within Latin America. These included activists, not just revolutionary groups, because in Latin America before the nineties there were a lot of military and political organizations who are fighting with arms in their hands. These groups sat down in Argentina, a lot of groups, from different countries; including guerrillas and other urban guerrilla groups; came together to discuss the best strategy now after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The reflection was that we need to be inclusive and that we need to see the reality as what it is, what happens in the field, and not our what mind wanted it to be. Previously in meetings you'd have people saying I'm from this party or that party or whatever, and this way of thinking was damaging to struggles, damaging our ability to build revolutionary organizations, whether you call it Anarchist, Socialist or whatever. That's why when we have meetings, after the nineties, we meet for example to organise a shanty town, everyone together. It didn't matter where you came from because it was the people of the shanty town who had the idea. So we want to organise the shanty town for what? To support Capitalism? No, to fight Capitalism; the idea is to fight Capitalism, and we can be united against that.

From those years there was also a rise of Indigenous struggles for self-determination and autonomy so all of us get together to support their right to do so. In this way it creates the conditions for the development of shanty towns, the poor people and Indigenous people, without saying to them what to do. Working with these people, so that's idea of this, the perspective of this, where we're going with this is to improve the situations and relationships between people. We think the best way create a movement and to work together is to have new relationships. Remake the relationship between people, one of solidarity, with values; not with competition between people, or competition for power, or all the stuff Capitalism has. So when we say we work with Indigenous people, we mean just that. We work with Indigenous people, not for them to provide us with people, to increase our number of militants, or to give power to us. They have to be the ones to make the main decisions; the idea of non-indigenous is to help empower them. This was the reflection following the collapse of the Soviet Union, to empower a movement from below, a revolution from below.

And the next thing was in '94 when the Zapatistas appear. What happened there? It occurred sixteen years ago, and some people have said nothing has happened. No, a lot has happened. Capitalist development took around 200 years, so when Marxist-Leninists talk about taking the power; they're doing the same thing as the Capitalists. They're fighting within the same framework as given to them by Capitalism. They don't create their own frameworks, their own situations of society. And also, the other concept is popular power, I don't know if you understand this but popular power means that the people own the resources and are able to run them themselves, whether within a community or a shanty town or whatever. In short, to create their own power. This is a big challenge which won't happen overnight. ◆

ANARCHY IS A FAG.

BY BENNY RUDEBOY

Here we are people… the first Anarcho-Queer column in the first edition of *Melbourne Black*. Keeping in the ideas of what *Melbourne Black* is about I will be keeping it all local or at least trying to. I am not speaking on behalf of anybody but myself.

In light of recent developments, I am going to bring up the unfortunate lack of response to the call-out that was made for a Pink&Black Bloc for Pride March 2010 in St Kilda. There were various notifications online including ones on anarcho-punk.net, facebook… etc. I was happy marching on the day to make some effort to promote visibility of Queer Anarchists however it would have been nice to have had more people there. As much as we need visibility and unity within the Anarchist movement/circles/ etc we need to be visible to the broader community. This can be done without looking like pushovers or poseurs.

The other big issue I want to address is that of Queerphobic violence in Melbourne and the need for a grassroots response and a practical one that doesn't rely on "speak-outs" (you know, the kinda of pathetic actions that the Socialist Alternative take… wankers). An alternative to reporting it to the GLLO (VicPol Gay & Lesbian Liason Officer), which we should know by now only serves a tokenist motive by the state. This is a call to start bashing back against Queerphobia!

I am more than willing to help in facilitating free classes in basic self-defence for Queers to be used in cases of physical attack. I totally understand those with pacifist leanings however at the same time I am sooo over hearing about Queer bashings at beats and anywhere else for that matter.

Malcolm X put it very simple for all when he talked about violence in self-defence not actually being violence in self-defence but being common sense. To put it bluntly, if Wom*n have their own self-defence classes around town and if the Black Panthers used to run martial arts schools/ classes back in the day then Queers can do the same here and now. If it is a matter of stopping a glass bottle to the head then it's worth it.

There have been, since the start of this year (2010), two reported Queerphobic assaults in Melbourne. They were also written about and published in the mainstream Gay press as well.

The first one was an on January 25th at the Alma Park beat in St Kilda where a man was slashed twice with a box-cutter to the arm and thigh (had the second cut been any lower on his thigh he would have bled to death) and bashed by three men and was hospitalised for the good part of a week with 3cm deep gashes. Apparently the three attackers had been in the park for at least thirty minutes and in that time had previously chased out other men from the area.

The second attack was on Valentines Day (Sunday, February 14th) at 3PM in Caulfield North on Dandenong Road near the Kooyong Road intersection. The victims were aged 39 and 30 both males and were attacked by a group of 10 men in who were reportedly in their early 20s. The two men were waiting for a tram and the group started hurling Queerphobic abuse at them. As the two men made their way back to their apartment they were followed one was kicked in the back of the leg and the older one was punched in the jaw and sustained a bloody mouth. While this occurred the group were yelling out "poofters". The punch occurred when one of the attackers made his way into their apartment stairwell. Both victims had made it clear after that the group may have been under the influence of alcohol at the time of the assault.

Another issue I would like to address here is the tired bullshit argument that is put against Anarcho-Queers (and Anarcho-Femininsts for that matter) and that is the case and alleged issue of "identity politics". Like workers and others, Queers are oppressed at

all levels in society's hierarchy. Working class, middle class, people of colour and even in the upper/ruling classes. All of these groupings in society have Queers who face oppression. Being Queer is not a matter of identity politics, it's a state of natural being and like being female (another natural state of being) we face oppression and violence from those who differ from us.

To put this into context I have two examples here.

The first being an Indigenous Queer male. They are more likely to be be demonised, profiled and harassed by the police (state power) for being Indigenous. Add being abused and ostracized from their families and communities for being Queer and then if that isn't bad enough lets add some racism thrown in their face by members of the broader LGBTI community.

The second example is a Transgendered male (FTM) from a working class background. They are oppressed for being of the working class, oppressed for being Transgender by various people and institutions including other wom*n who in some cases label them as 'traitors' or 'self-hating'… oppression of the Transgendered also comes from modern psychiatry as they are labelled as having Gender Identity Disorder. It is written clearly in the DSM IV-TR (Diagnostic Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders). In order to transition with the use of hormones they have to first admit to being mentally ill regardless of what they really think and feel. This adds the stigma of mental illness to their oppression.

This is only the tip of the proverbial iceberg.

This form of oppression is usually put aside by others in the Anarchist movement and leads to further alienation of Queers in their own activist circles. This is why we need an Anarcho-Queer presence in both the Anarchist movement and the broader LGBTI "movement".

By the way… there is some talk of action happening around solidarity with the Ugandan Queer community who will most likely be subject to life prison terms or even execution for being Queer. This of course is supported by the Ugandan Anglican clergy. Keep an eye out for updates.

Any comments or criticism can be sent to: bash_back_86@riseup.net

I am more than happy to keep an open line of communication with all interested. ◆

BASH BACK! (MELBOURNE)

A Queer Anarchist direct action network

Points of Unity:

1. Fight for liberation. Nothing more, nothing less. State recognition in the form of oppressive institutions such as marriage and militarism are not steps toward liberation but rather towards heteronormative assimilation
2. A rejection of Capitalism, Imperialism and all forms of State power.
3. Actively oppose oppression both in and out of the "movement". All oppressive behaviour is not to be tolerated.
4. Respect a diversity of tactics in the struggle for liberation. Do not solely condemn an action on the grounds that the State deems it to be illegal.

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http://bashbacknews.wordpress.com

No Gods, No Masters!

EDUCATION MATTERS. BY SEAMUS

MySchool and the disciplining of educational productivity

On January 28, the government launched the MySchool website (www.myschool.edu.au). MySchool lets anyone view the naplan (National Assessment Program – Literacy And Numeracy) test results of any school in the country.

The data are presented side-by-side with national average results and the average for "statistically similar schools" which share demographic characteristics like socio-economic status. The launch of the site occurred in spite of an outcry from the teaching unions and some parents' groups, though others have welcomed it. For this article, I will ignore the implications for student learning and experiences, focussing instead on the conflict between the government and the Australian Education Union (AEU). If one interprets teaching as essentially a productive industry, the actions surrounding NAPLAN can be viewed as a speed-up on the production line of Australian education.

Naplan, introduced nation-wide in 2008, is a standardised test which measures student achievement in five areas of competency: reading, writing, spelling, grammar, and numeracy. Julia Gillard, Minister for Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations, has claimed that the display of NAPLAN results on MySchool will hold enable the public to hold its institutions accountable for their results. Farrah Tomazin raves in *The Age* that the site offers "a definite benefit: the chance to identify schools in need and to hold the government to account" (Tomazin 2009). For instance, we might demand that the government re-allocate funds to underprivileged or underperforming schools. And indeed, ten days after the launch of the site, the government announced that $1.5 billion will be spent over the next seven years on schools serving poorer communities. $11 million has been directed to schools which are identified as underperforming on the test. The government claims that this kind of targeted funding would not have been possible "were it not for the additional information on the MySchool site" (DEEWR 2010). This is a curious claim, since the information has been available to the ministry internally all along. This policy could easily have been designed before the launch of MySchool, and the timing of this announcement suggests a promotion for the site. Is anyone really surprised that the government is only too eager to be judged by the standards it set for itself? It would be absurd to suggest that students write the criteria for their own grades, or workers nominate their own bosses, but here the government is "accountable." Okay. Obviously, it is teachers and schools who will be under far more pressure.

The AEU has responded to the site launch with outrage. The prospect they fear most is the creation of "league tables." While MySchool allows one to view individual schools and their comparison to averages, it does not display lists of schools ranked from most to least successful on the Naplan test. However, it is a fairly straight-forward, if tedious, process to use the data provided on MySchool to produce these tables, which several people did within 24 hours of the launch of the site, offering complete lists online for $97. Newspapers could follow if they so choose, like the *London Times* rates British universities every year. AEU president Angelo Gavrielatos says,

> Education Minister Julia Gillard says she opposes league tables because they are misleading and make the job of teachers and principals harder and yet she has facilitated their creation… League tables which name and shame schools… give schools bad reputations which they do not deserve and undermine the confidence of students and teachers (AEU 2010).

Is anyone really surprised that the government is only too eager to be judged by the standards it set for itself?

Disciplined bodies self-censor their behaviour without the need for coercion.

At the Federal AEU conference on January 19 delegates voted unanimously to boycott the NAPLAN test in May unless the government "takes steps" to prevent the creation of league tables by 12 April (Patty 2010). For Gavrielatos, "The question is when is the Federal Government going to act to protect students?" Of course, the policy affects teachers as well as students, or else one would not expect such unity from the union, which has its share of cynical members and cynical officials like any other union.

Gavrielatos is absolutely correct: the government *has* facilitated the creation of a tool that undermines the confidence of teachers. And he is right not to bother asking the government to protect teachers. MySchool is *intended* to undermine their confidence. Following Foucault (1991), the development of hierarchical surveillance technologies like MySchool can be understood as the development of disciplinary power. Disciplined bodies self-censor their behaviour without the need for coercion. The *potential* gaze of the eyes "that must see without being seen" is enough (172). Anyone who has ridden on Melbourne's public transport system is familiar with discipline: you don't buy a ticket because you know it will be inspected, you buy a ticket because it *might* be at any time. MySchool, however, represents a special kind of the development of discipline.

> We have seen that anyone may come and exercise… the functions of surveillance… Not only by the appointed inspectors, but also… the public; any member of society will have the right to come and see with his own eyes how the schools, hospitals, factories, prisons function… The disciplinary mechanism will be democratically controlled, since it will be constantly accessible 'to the great tribunal committee of the world' (207).

Julia Gillard's ideology of accountability in education is precisely this "democratic" surveillance of the workforce. All eyes, literally, can be on the teachers, judging their performance through the normative lense provided by the government. Foucault claims that "at the heart of all disciplinary mechanisms functions a small penal mechanism" (177). At this stage, the penal element seems to be merely stigma and castigation in the press (imagine this headline: *The Worst School in Australia*). But with the strengthening of discipline through NAPLAN, other measures could easily be introduced: either merit pay, which would determine teacher salaries based on their students' test scores; or an imitation of No Child Left Behind (USA) that bases school funding on test scores and "restructures" consistently failing school as neoliberal public-private partnerships. Teachers have much to fear in terms of job control, wages and conditions, unless of course they begin teaching to the test.

I have tried to demonstrate in this article how the launch of the MySpace web site, and the publication of NAPLAN results, constitutes an attempt by government to force teachers closer to its own standards for education. I have analysed this conflict as one might any industrial dispute, predicated on the assumption that teaching is a productive industry like any other. Of course, teaching isn't exactly like any other industry, it is forced into that mould. In the next issue I will explore what consequences this has for the "product" of education itself, and for students. ◆

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ANARCHY v. MARXISM

BY CONAL

We are regularly treated by leninist groups to articles, talks and pamphlets on this topic. Unsurprising I guess, seeing as over recent decades anarchism has cut into the bread and butter of leninism, within Melbourne at any rate.

All those young, bright eyed university students running around summit protests, in ever increasing numbers calling themselves anarchists or organising in ways which might be described as anarchist. It must be a scary thing to aging central committees, wondering how to recruit the next generation of newspaper sellers for another three years.

Like most anarchists from the student milieu, I must admit to being an ex-member of a leninist group. This fact is illuminating in itself, considering the usual claim within the aforementioned propaganda is that anarchism is a kind of infantile disorder radicals go through before reaching the lofty heights of marxism. The opposite is rapidly becoming the case. Anarchist groups, small in number though they are, are full to the brim of ex-leninists, people who have been initially exposed almost exclusively to marxist-leninism, before they began to explore the possibility of libertarian socialism. It would be impossible within a leninist organisation of any sufficient size (and therefore whereby their dogged authoritarian structures can have significant affect) to gain an accurate impression of anarchism. Thankfully though, due to circumstances anarchists can hardly claim credit for, the size and capacity of leninist groups to properly apply the bolshevik airbrush of history, for either their own rank and file or an audience, has significantly declined.

Leninists would prefer to pretend anarchism doesn't exist. Failing that they'll twist it into something else entirely. I attended one Party talk last year in which the speaker announced he would not be addressing anarcho-syndicalism, did not discuss any anarchist organisation, and instead decided to berate a few obscure poststructrualist philosophers the types of which "anarchists" he had met at uni. This makes about as much sense as giving a talk about marxism and not mentioning Lenin. Perhaps anarchists should start giving talks around Melbourne on the pitfalls of marxism noting all the key figures like Adorno, Habermas and Baudrillard. We'd have a much better argument in tracing the origins of postmodern intellectual liberalism, to marxism. Much of this rhetoric, taught at universities today, developed straight out of marxism. Like marxism, postmodernism resonates most strongly with a radicalised intelligentsia, as it preserves an inflated role for the radical intellectual (if remaining radical at all). The failure and despotic consequences of the marxist-leninist project in the 20th Century, is for marxist-leninists apologised for while championing an historically alternate dictator (Trotsky). While for postmodernists, this failure is perhaps the passing of a revolutionary moment after which all is lost, if it ever existed at all. The history of how free, democratic, libertarian and non-state institutions like soviets were destroyed by state power, and Lenin, is simply ignored.

When leninists cannot ignore anarchism, and after misrepresenting it, they will then engage us a debates over the correct revolutionary line in some historical circumstance or another. While we may have our opinions, what leninists do not realise is that anarchism does not imagine placing another middle or ruling class hero (or even a worker) at the head of the working class body politic in order to 'keep it on the tracks.' Anarchism champions organisational structures in which the mass of workers actually reign control over their own organisations. Theory and revolutionary consciousness are important, but only insofar as they represent the debates and political practice of the whole class, freely federated together in solidarity with one another while retaining autonomy on

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Any proper discussion of anarchism runs dangerously close to bursting the ideological bubble these groups create for their lower orders of membership.

questions where they disagree. Only in the context of workers' autonomy and association by free agreement, can we talk about genuine revolutionary theory, consciousness, or the permeation of these throughout the class. The workers' assembly, therefore, is the highest principle of anarchism, not an infallible individual or position on a single question. Working class organisations with a more libertarian structure such as this, have always out performed their authoritarian counterparts. The 'radical line' is always best maintained by those with an actual economic interest in the overthrow of capitalism; the workers themselves.

Marxist-leninism on the other hand, is the intellectual tradition which by increasing degrees in the early 20th Century, specifically made the argument that a radicalised intelligentsia, part of bourgeoisie class, needed to govern and control the workers' movement. As Lenin put it clearly many times, "consciousness had to be brought to them from without." The correct ideology was social democracy, which, "arose quite independently of the spontaneous growth of the labour movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of ideas among the Socialist Intelligentsia." (Lenin, V. I., 'What is to be Done?,' in The Essentials of Lenin, Vol. 2, 170). For Lenin, intellectuals could not only participate in working class organisations; they were born to lead them. The party structure of organising, (an institution also borrowed from the ruling class), the control by the party over participatory organisations like unions (or student groups, anything!), and the theory and practice of then amalgamating all of these institutions into a state apparatus, is all based on the incorrect assumption that workers and peasants were too stupid to run a socialist movement for themselves. They needed a strong, enlightened government, this time made up of the right bourgeois intellectuals.

Today, in an effort to sustain this glorious role through history, the marxist-leninists-trotskyists in Melbourne must either ignore or distort the entire history of libertarian workers struggle. In particular, anarchism, which articulates much that history from the earliest days for the First International, is anathema to them (you may have notice their virulence whenever they broach the anarchy topic). Any proper discussion of anarchism runs dangerously close to bursting the ideological bubble these groups create for their lower orders of membership. Here, I've only briefly had time to look at the fact that leninism is inherently elitist. However, there are many other, more specific aspects the the trotskyist ideological bubble that anarchism places in danger. As mentioned, as the bubble shrinks it gets harder to maintain. This helps explain not only the regular feature of anarchist bashing on the trotskyist poster circuit, but the now also almost desperate vigilance in having you buy that newspaper and come to the next meeting.

You might think this is all a bit harsh, and yes I'm engaging in a bit of trot bashing myself here. We all know a nice trotskyist or two, but it's not the nice ones you have to worry about. They'll all be gone by the third or fourth purge anyway. The problem, from an anarchist perspective, is not individuals, 'good' or 'bad' leaders. Class organisation of society creates certain economic interests and antagonisms. Second to that, political and social institutions reflect both these basic economic interests, as well as a host of more complex power relationships, but they also reflect the changing nature of the consciousness of the participants. Our organisations then, are the very embodiment of the linkage between theory and practice. Curious that despite the historical failure of their dismal project, trotskyists still choose to ignore the rich possibilities of libertarian organising within the class, instead continuing to preach from above it. ◆

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